

OUTCOME REPORT: SCANDINAVIAN BUSINESS CONSULTATION: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

21 April 2015, Stockholm, Sweden

Introduction

OCHA's Private Sector Section (PSS) and Ericsson AB hosted a Scandinavian business consultation on 21 April 2015 in Ericsson headquarters in Stockholm. The consultation was attended by 42 representatives from the private sector (multi-national and national), the international humanitarian community (including UN, NGOs and academia) and the governments of Finland, Norway and Sweden. The consultation identified issues, provided recommendations and made commitments on how to increase involvement and deliver better-targeted private sector support from the Scandinavian business community to humanitarian emergency preparedness and response.

Issues

The following themes and issues emerged from the discussions:

- 1 The scale and nature of emergencies is stretching the current capacities of the humanitarian system like never before. There is a need for the humanitarian architecture to evolve accordingly towards a more multi-stakeholder approach, in order to leverage the contributions from less traditional actors in emergency preparedness and response, such as the Private Sector.
- 2 There is an emerging trend towards increased engagement by the private sector in humanitarian affairs and the acknowledgement that the private sector has the skills, resources, networks, innovative practices and expertise to create significant impact during emergency preparedness and response.
- 3 There is an increased recognition of the impact that private sector engagement can have in helping to reduce humanitarian organizations' overhead and delivery costs as well as help address the gap between the level of humanitarian needs and available resources for humanitarian responses.
- 4 There is no lack of opportunity for further private sector engagement in emergency preparedness and response, particularly as technology is offering increasingly innovative solutions to address key humanitarian challenges. However, there are often challenges in bringing these innovative opportunities to the attention of the humanitarian community.
- 5 The people on the ground are often the first to respond to emergencies, and local private sector has a crucial role in emergency preparedness and response efforts, through its capacity to deliver substantial impact and enable the swift recovery of affected communities.

Challenges

The following challenges emerged from the discussions:

- 1 Businesses seeking to engage with the international humanitarian community in emergency preparedness and response face difficulty in identifying entry points for collaboration as well as clear humanitarian needs.
- 2 The humanitarian community needs to more effectively communicate the requirements for emergency preparedness and response efforts to businesses.
- 3 The United Nations and the humanitarian community do not give sufficient attention to small innovative entities and start-ups. They face difficulties in getting funding and support for the development of new innovative products and solutions that can substantially contribute to addressing the needs of affected communities.
- 4 The United Nations does not sufficiently facilitate the testing and experimentation of new products that may have positive impact during emergencies.

Solutions & Recommendations

The following solutions were recommended:

- 1 Set up mechanisms for strengthened and continued dialogue between the humanitarian community and the private sector.
- 2 Create or communicate meeting places, with clear focal points or clusters, where the private sector can interact with the humanitarian community and learn how and where to engage.
- 3 Develop greater collaboration frameworks for coordinated response from the Scandinavian private sector.
- 4 Create or develop innovation platforms to promote and facilitate the valuable contributions of the private sector to emergency responses.

- 5 Identify ways in which to improve procurement processes between the United Nations and the private sector in order to facilitate the establishment of partnerships that can have serious impact during emergencies.

Commitments

The following commitments were made:

- 1 The development and launch of a Scandinavian Charter for business engagement in humanitarian affairs, codifying adherence to humanitarian principles and the commitment to address needs through a coordinated approach.
- 2 The creation of a competition rewarding ideas on how to facilitate the delivery of innovative solutions to help address humanitarian needs.
- 3 The project to advocate for 5-10% of UN procurement budgets to be spent on innovative solutions and products, to be pushed internally by the governments of Sweden, Finland and Norway.
- 4 The continued support to the WHS process including helping refine and develop the voice of business in the lead up to the Summit in 2016.